

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS

Minutes of the meeting of the Chairs & Vice Chairs meeting held virtually on Thursday, 25 February 2021 at 5.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Chairs & Vice Chairs Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor T Williams	Councillor G Thomas
Councillor S. Rees-Owen	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor R Yeo	Councillor S Evans

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Ms Julia Nicholls, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Ms Sarah Daniel, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ms Claire Hendy, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications provided a verbal update to members on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and covered the following points:

- Corporate Joint Committees
- 16/17 year old voting in elections
- Intention to give a report to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny in the next few weeks to summarise the key points
- A report had been taken to SLT outlining the Authority's position. Much of the intention of the Act is around increasing public participation.
- Lots of changes around general power of competence which allows for all Councils to be more ambitious in the future around what policies they are able to take forward.
- Requirement for a petitions arrangement will be debated if reaches the required number of signatures.
- The Act encourages greater diversity and shared working arrangements.
- Commitment from SLT for formal arrangements for Pre-scrutiny
- Formalised Regional Working
- New systems for Performance management and Governance arrangements. More robust set of information available in the future.
- Ability for voluntary mergers
- Low level changes including non-domestic rates
- The Act makes statutory with how we already work together with Community Councils.
- HOD given more influence to support members
- Changes to how Fire and Rescue service works.

The Chairman commented that when the report comes to Overview and Scrutiny should be extended to all members to attend to give their contributions and ensure all members are aware of the changes ahead

Another member agreed and was reassured to hear that RCT were already ahead of some local authorities and were already working to the practices that were proposed.

RESOLVED: Members noted the report

3 Annual Reports

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications sought the advice of the Chairs and Vice Chairs on the formatting of the annual reports for this year.

The Chairman commented that last year's reports could be published online. A detailed report for this year could then have a link to the previous report. He added that the report should be streamlined where possible and draw out the key items and outcomes from the last year.

Another member agreed and stated she thought there wasn't a need to revisit previous reports and this year's report should be streamlined as she was aware of the time pressures faced by the officers writing the report

RESOLVED: Members noted the update

4 General Update

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications provided an update to members which covered the following:

- Scrutiny Webpages – these will be reviewed and amended to promote Public Participation
- Social Media - to ask the public to identify scrutiny items and form part of the public participation strategy
- Chairs Blogs – these would be shortly uploaded to the scrutiny web pages
- An update on the Members portal will be reported to Democratic Services Committee
- Virtual engagement will be the default way to engage with the Council at this time. This includes ward related issues, planning applications etc.
- Democratic Services Working Group – its purpose was to engage more people in the democratic process and we could also use this process for potential new members.

RESEARCH PROVISION

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication advised that

the temporary support initially available has now been made a permanent. He advised that there hasn't been a lot of up-take, but we really encourage all members to support and use the service as the resource is there. He added that this would be included on all scrutiny agendas in the future to serve as a reminder to members.

SCRUTINY / CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications advised that these sessions would be scheduled for the start of the municipal year as they add value and Chairs are informed of an early work programme. He advised that this process would be made formal with sessions scheduled throughout the year. He added that it would allow Scrutiny to align their work programmes with the Cabinet work programme

The Chair of Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee stated that the Cabinet Member always attends Public Service Delivery Committee and he welcomed her input to the meetings. He also supported the engagements sessions stating they were a useful insight and supported the formation of the Cabinet work Programme.

DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY HANDBOOK

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications informed members that we have been asked by Welsh Government to be involved in a working group to draft guidance for a handbook for Local Authorities. He advised he would keep members informed as the group progresses

WEBCASTING

Members were advised that work is near completion in the chamber which had been reconfigured to support the broadcasting of meetings.

Officer training will take place after the technology install had been completed. The new technology will mean that meetings will be able to be broadcast live, whilst also allowing members to have the choice to join virtually. The technology would also enhance the translation and voting systems already in place.

Members were advised that managing a meeting that will be hybrid will be a significant undertaking for officers so this would not be undertaken until full training had been provided to officers and members

RESOLVED: Members noted the update

5 Urgent Business

None

**Cllr M Adams
Chairman.**